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# Blind Citizens Australia

# Business Plan 2019-2021

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## 1. Executive Summary

Over the past 43 years, Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) has built a strong reputation for empowering Australians who are blind or vision impaired to lead full and active lives and make a meaningful contribution to their communities. As an organisation run by and for people who are blind or vision impaired, BCA is uniquely positioned to represent the needs and interests of its 3000 members and of all Australians who are blind or vision impaired locally, nationally and internationally. This is evidenced by the numerous achievements we have spearheaded throughout our history, such as the introduction of audible traffic signals, the widespread implementation of tactile ground surface indicators and the inclusion of blindness specific requirements into the education, transport and wayfinding standards, to name a few.

Founded in 1975 by people who are blind or vision impaired, BCA has experienced many changes and challenges throughout its history. However, at its core, the organisation has maintained an enduring commitment to the following principles:

* People who are blind or vision impaired are best placed to advocate for their needs in all aspects of life.
* People who are blind or vision impaired can derive significant benefits from connecting with their peers and learning from the lived experience, skills and knowledge of others.
* People who are blind or vision impaired have the right to receive high quality, accessible services which meet their needs.

Since the challenging period of 2014-15, BCA has grown rapidly and achieved much. It is now a confident, engaged and sustainable organisation with a more skilled Board and staff team, an increased national presence and a strong commitment to a more diversified approach to membership engagement. This plan provides an aspirational yet realistic road map to guide the organisation’s trajectory over the next three years. We will know we have been successful in executing this plan when:

* People who are blind or vision impaired, from all walks of life and all sections of the community, feel welcome at our events and are able to access our services;
* Equal access to the community, including employment, education, entertainment and transport is more readily available for people who are blind or vision impaired;
* BCA is a sustainable organisation with the financial and human resources to deliver on its mission;
* We are respected by our partners and stakeholders and provide strong national representation as the voice of people who are blind or vision impaired.

BCA is justifiably proud of its recent achievements. We believe that this plan will be the catalyst for the next phase of our development and look forward with confidence to continuing to work with our members, partners and stakeholders to change what it means to be blind in Australia.

## About Us

Blind Citizens Australia was established in 1975 to provide a direct voice for all people in Australia who are blind or vision impaired. The fundamentals of the organisation were, and remain, that all blind/vision impaired people can join by right and participate fully in the governance, policy development and advocacy activities of the organisation.

Originally "National Federation of Blind Citizens", BCA was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee in 1988. The organisation enjoys "Public Benevolent Institution" (PBI) and "Deductible Gift Recipient" (DGR) status with the ATO.

BCA delivers programs and services across four streams;

* information and referral;
* peer support;
* capacity building;
* individual and systemic advocacy.

Our Vision:To be the united voice of Australians who are blind or vision impaired.

Our Mission:To achieve equity and equality through our empowerment and by promoting positive community attitudes and striving for high quality and accessible services which meet our needs.

Organisational Vision:A sustainable, credible and independent organisation, led by people who are blind or vision impaired, which represents the needs, interests and aspirations of its members and all others who are blind or vision impaired.

### Our Values

Our values have been developed through carrying out our mission for over forty years. Our culture and public image have been formed from the following values:

* **Advocacy:** We educate the public and advocate for the long term best interests of people who are blind or vision impaired.
* **Diversity:** We understand the variety of ways in which people experience blindness or vision impairment; we recognise that people who are blind or vision impaired are part of all races, ethnicities and religions and we seek to assist them without discrimination.
* **Free speech:** We accept that people who are blind or vision impaired have the right to express their opinion publicly.
* **Independence:** We aim, and encourage members, to be free from dependence on, or control by, another person or organisation.
* **Individualised support:** We seek to understand the individual and to work with them to achieve their expressed goals.
* **Integrity and accountability:** We hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity and strive to be fully accountable for all aspects of our work.
* **Responsiveness:** We seek solutions that meet the needs and preferences of people who are blind or vision impaired.
* **Self Determination:** We encourage and assist individuals to develop an ability to make their own decisions without interference from others.

## Context

In 2014, (along with other diagnostic-specific disability peak bodies), BCA lost its commonwealth government funding. As a result, the organisation experienced a period of crisis which, while difficult for all involved, presented an opportunity to modernise and reinvigorate the organisation. Fortunately, BCA has a history of producing strong and effective leaders:

* Graeme Innes AO has served as Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Commissioner;
* David Blyth AO and Maryanne Diamond AO have served four year terms as President of the World Blind Union;
* Maryanne Diamond AO served as Chair of the International Disability Alliance;
* At least twenty BCA leaders have served (or are serving) on the boards of major blindness service agencies;
* Graeme Innes AO served as Chair, and Michael Simpson as Deputy Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Body on Disability in its various configurations;
* At least eight BCA leaders have been, or are employed at the executive level within major blindness service agencies.

During this period, BCA’s current leadership team understood the value of drawing on the wisdom and expertise of its former leaders as a sounding board for its Directors and management team. To achieve this, we established a Former Leaders Advisory Group which continues to be a vital source of support to current Directors and management.

Today, with the help of our members and our current and former leaders, BCA is enjoying a period of rapid growth and is a truly national representative voice of Australians who are blind or vision impaired. Our strategic direction is under-pinned by four pillars:

**Sustainability:** Which requires us to achieve;

* adequate funding from a diverse range of funding sources;
* an appropriately skilled and committed staff team;
* an expanding and more diversified membership.

**Credibility:** Which requires a commitment to;

* evidence based public policy development and well-articulated advocacy;
* well-developed internal communications and networking mechanisms that remain in tune with the needs and aspirations of the membership;
* well-developed sector intelligence mechanisms;
* the strategic appointment of skilled external representatives with appropriate feedback mechanisms in place.

**Independence:** Which requires the development and maintenance of strategic partnerships, across the blindness and broader disability sectors, with no organisation in a position to exercise undue influence over the BCA Board or staff.

**Leadership:** Which requires us to ensure we have;

* skilled and committed leadership;
* a leadership training and succession plan that is integrated into all aspects of the organization.

### Who We Represent

While BCA is a membership organisation, our programs and services are open to anyone who is blind or vision impaired across Australia. Individual membership is available to anyone who is blind or vision impaired and over the age of 16, for a once only joining fee (currently $20). Associate membership is available to others with an interest in the work of BCA and junior membership is available to anyone under the age of 16. BCA currently has approximately 3000 full (voting) members and 150 associate members.

While all full members have voting and participation rights at the national level, many choose to come together through one of the organisation's thirteen regional or special interest branches for peer support, social and local advocacy activities. Currently branches function in all State Capitals, Canberra and throughout Regional NSW. The National Women's Branch draws members from across the country.

Following amalgamation of Blind Citizens NSW into BCA in December 2017 and given that there are five regional branches functioning across NSW and the ACT a state-wide structure, (the NSW/ACT State Division) has been established to assist coordination across NSW and the ACT.

### Our Outreach

BCA works collaboratively with blindness service agencies and through forums such as ABF, Vision 2020 Australia, Roundtable on Information Access, Australian Braille Authority and subject specific working parties such as the Audio Description Blindness Sector Working Group, to ensure that its policy development and articulation is representative of the broader blind/vision impaired community.

At a local level, representatives from our various branches work closely with local blindness and cross disability organisations to ensure that community views are represented in our local and national work.

Policy development is based on direct consultation through State representatives to the National Policy Council, our communications channels and direct community surveys. These processes are never limited to BCA members and over recent years much of the feedback received has come from beyond the BCA membership.

BCA's status as the accredited representative of people who are blind or vision impaired is acknowledged by the Australian and various State Governments and is reflected through our participation in forums such as:

* The NDIA CEO's Forum for Disabled Persons Representative Organisations;
* State and commonwealth transport committees;
* State and commonwealth electoral commission advisory groups;
* Education advisory committees; and more.

### Capacity-building

Since its inception, BCA's National Conventions and State Forums have provided a focus on capacity building and leadership development for members, through a combination of presentations, panel discussions and subject specific workshops. These are often presented or facilitated by members and time is always allocated for discussion of policy and governance matters with less experienced members mentored to contribute to the debate.

In June 2015 BCA convened a Leadership Summit as the first step in a commitment to bring together current, former and potential leaders to chart the future of the organisation and provide a more structured platform for development and capacity building. 35 members participated in the Summit which included presentations from across the community sector and extended workshop sessions that resulted in a total of 55 recommendations. Of these, 35 have been achieved and 13 are in the pipeline.

Since then, BCA has made an increasing commitment to peer support, development and capacity building, as the following activities demonstrate:

* During 2017 we conducted a series of 20 workshops and teleconferences, ng more than 120 people across NSW, Victoria and the ACT, to provide independent information about accessing the NDIS and My Aged Care programs for people who are blind or vision impaired.
* In July 2017 fifty members came together in Melbourne for our first Leadership Development Forum. The objectives for the weekend were to build leadership skills, increase BCA's ability to engage with marginalised and isolated people and to begin the process of establishing a cohesive network to provide peer support to the organisation's leaders.
* In association with First Peoples Disability Network, we convened the first Aboriginal Blind Persons Gathering where 15 Aboriginal people from across Australia came together to explore issues that place unnecessary burdens on their lives.
* In both 2017 and 2018 we have sponsored members to participate in the Enchanted Hills Camps conducted by the San Francisco Lighthouse for the Blind.
* And, we are currently co-ordinating LifeReady and Leadership Development programs in NSW, ACT, Victoria and South Australia that are funded through NDIA ILC Grants and the Department of Health and Human Services in Victoria.

### Our Commitment to accessibility

BCA is strongly committed to the social model of disability when it comes to providing accessible programs and services. For instance, members are able to select their preferred format for publications and correspondence. We utilise communications tools such as text messaging and audio recordings via our telephone system to provide members with current and timely information. Recognising that for many blindness is not their only disability, we are committed to holding events in wheelchair accessible venues, subsidising support workers and interpreters and to providing hearing augmentation whenever possible.

### Our Key Achievements

In 2016 BCA reflected on achievements over our forty year history by publishing ["Blind Citizens Australia – Forty Years of Achievement".](https://www.bca.org.au/about/) This paper reflects on our major policy involvements and the achievements of many past and current leaders. Details of our more current campaigning and policy work can be found in our [2017-18 Year in Review](https://www.bca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2017-18-Year-in-Review-for-web.docx) and via our website.

Highlights over the past three years have included:

* Implementation of 33 of the 55 recommendations which resulted from a leaders’ summit held in 2015 to re-invigorate the organisation following the loss of its Federal Government funding.
* Delivery of a successful national convention with Dr Fred Schroeder, President of the World Blind Union as our Keynote Speaker. This event included engagement from over 300 people in person, online and via the RPH network.
* Advocacy in areas such as the provision of an audio description service on Australian television, the inaccessibility of touch screen banking devices, airline accessibility, access to public transport and more. Over the past two years, BCA has made 25 submissions to Government enquiries and our National Policy Council, (NPC) has worked to refresh existing BCA policies and create new ones.
* Conduct of our first Leadership Development Forum which brought together 50 key members of the organisation, including Directors, staff, presidents of local branches, emerging leaders and others with key roles in the organisation, for a weekend of presentations and discussions involving fifteen presenters. The objectives of the forum were to build leadership skills, increase BCA's capacity to engage with marginalised and isolated people and to begin the process of establishing a cohesive network to provide peer support to the organisation's leaders.
* Receiving and being short-listed for three awards in 2017:
* In August we won the "BBCON $10K Challenge". The challenge was sponsored and organised by software development company Blackbaud Pacific, and our entry demonstrated, via an audio described video, the importance of advocating for audio description on television.
* We were recognised for our advocacy work as one of five organisations to be selected as finalists in the social impact category of the 2017 HESTA Community Sector Awards.
* We were honoured to win the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Community Organisation Award which recognises organisations that have a proven track record in the advancement of human rights in the Australian community.

## Market Analysis

### Our Markets and Unique Selling Points

* BCA is unique because we provide a national, independent, representative voice for people who are blind or vision impaired in all age groups, from all demographics and across all Australian states and territories.
* We are not a registered NDIS provider or Supports Coordinator, meaning we are well-placed to advocate for the rights of all Australians who are blind or vision impaired, with no vested interest for our organisation.
* Our advocacy and policy work encompasses all aspects of life for Australians who are blind or vision impaired.
* BCA provides services and support to anyone who is blind or vision impaired, or anyone with an interest in blindness or vision impairment, irrespective of whether or not they are a BCA member.
* We are disability-led. Our constitution requires that 100% of our Board and National Policy Council are people who are blind or vision impaired. Our CEO is blind and six of our twelve current staff are also vision impaired. We are committed to the development of current and aspiring leaders who are blind or vision impaired. Our services are delivered using the principles of the rights based social model of disability.
* BCA's mandate is complimentary to those of rehabilitation provision and eye-care focussed organisations. We believe that the quality of life for people who are blind or vision impaired goes beyond receiving services and protecting eye health, because "changing what it means to be blind" is also about empowerment, peer support and self-determination.
* We are a thought leader, as evidenced by our significant public policy work and the frequent requests for media comment and speaking engagements we receive. We are a motivator, as evidenced by our many past and current campaigns. We aim to model best practice in everything we do. We practice what we preach.

### Our Markets and Offer

1. **People who are blind or vision impaired, including BCA members and non-members**

Our Offer and Aims:

* high quality, affordable, accessible and timely information, programs and services which meet the needs of diverse groups and are delivered by BCA or in partnership with other organisations;
* peer support and networking opportunities;
* mentoring, employment, training and leadership opportunities;
* professional individual advocacy support;
* opportunities to contribute to local and national campaigns;
* opportunities to contribute to the work of BCA through volunteering or making a donation; and,
* opportunities to provide feedback on programs and services.

We aim to grow this market, with a particular emphasis on people from diverse backgrounds and from regional and remote communities. We will do so through targeted marketing with the assistance of our partners and stakeholders, improving our CRM and IT infrastructure to assist us in better targeting people who could benefit from our programs and services and by employing a dedicated Development Manager to work with current members and build additional networks.

1. **Family and friends of people who are blind or vision impaired**

Our Offer and Aims:

* information which enhances their understanding of the impact of blindness and vision impairment and the capacity of people who are blind or vision impaired to live productive and independent lives;
* opportunities to network with other families and friends of people who are blind or vision impaired;
* opportunities to contribute to our work through volunteering, making donations or contributing to campaigns.

We aim to provide more targeted information to this cohort, in particular reaching out to families of young people who are blind or vision impaired so they can learn about BCA and our members at an early age.

1. **Partners, including blindness service providers, adaptive equipment suppliers, eye health professionals and blindness and broader disability peak bodies in Australia and overseas**

Our Offer and Aims:

* timely and up-to-date information about BCA and its programs and services for referral purposes;
* representation by BCA in relation to issues which directly impact people who are blind or vision impaired;
* the expertise of BCA and its membership in relation to lived experience of blindness or vision impairment;
* involvement in conventions and forums and opportunities to collaborate on campaigns and policy work as appropriate.

We aim to continue to build our relationship with this market through collaboration on mutually beneficial areas of work and through the development of strong and enduring relationships which allow for healthy discussion and debate when required.

1. **Governments - local, state and federal**

Our Offer and aims

* information and advice;
* a national representative body acting as a centralised voice of people who are blind or vision impaired;
* a model of best practice for inclusion and employment of people with disability.

We aim to continue to raise awareness of BCA within this market, to provide a valuable resource to government and the organisations it funds, and to lobby on behalf of people who are blind or vision impaired for ongoing support at all levels.

We aim to continue to develop our offer to this market through the development of strategic relationships and by responding to governments’ changing priorities and needs.

1. **Funding bodies (philanthropic, trusts, corporate)**

Our Offer and Aims:

* Information and Advice;
* reputation and branding through association with BCA as the national representative body whose reputation is growing rapidly (corporate social responsibility, corporate value)

We aim to continue to develop our offer to this market through more strategic relationships and through educating funding bodies on blindness and vision impairment, (including the accessibility of their application processes.)

1. **Commercial/corporate organisations outside of the blindness sector - the broader community including business, the media and the general public**

Our Offer and Aims:

* Access to high quality information about blindness and vision impairment;
* articulate and well-informed representatives to act as trainers, educators and spokespeople;
* consultancy services;
* opportunity to make donations;

### Competitors

In the main, BCA’s competitors are our own members, partners and organisations that work within the blindness sector. We are committed to taking a transparent and collaborative approach to support the sector as a whole by working with:

* All Australians who are blind or vision impaired, irrespective of whether they are a BCA member or whether they are affiliated with other blindness groups or organisations;
* Blindness service providers and eye health practitioners;
* Disability and community peak bodies.

## Strategic Goals and Key Performance indicators

| Goal | 3 Year Target | 2019 KPI | 2020 KPI | 2021 KPI |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Maintain and continuously improve the quality of member engagement and communications | BCA doubles its membership to 6000  BCA communications channels contain accurate and timely information and are produced on time  BCA offers at least 4 forums to facilitate member engagement annually  People who are Deafblind can actively participate in BCA events | Membership increase to at least 3500  BCA communications channels contain accurate and timely information and are produced on time  BCA offers at least 3 forums to facilitate member engagement  People who are Deafblind can participate in face-to-face events | Membership increase to at least 5000  BCA communications channels contain accurate and timely information and are produced on time  BCA offers at least 4 forums to facilitate member engagement – at least one in a regional or remote location  People who are Deafblind can participate in face-to-face and online events | Membership increase to at least 6000  BCA communications channels contain accurate and timely information and are produced on time  BCA offers at least 4 forums to facilitate member engagement – at least one in a regional or remote location  People who are Deafblind can participate in face-to-face and online events |
| 1. Develop and Strengthen Connections with Key Community Stakeholders | BCA consolidates existing partnerships and creates at least 3 new partnerships  BCA proactively develops connections with and engages campaign allies on issues of importance | BCA consolidates existing partnerships and creates one new partnership  BCA proactively develops connections with and engages campaign allies on issues of importance | BCA consolidates existing partnerships and creates one new partnership  BCA proactively develops connections with and engages campaign allies on issues of importance | BCA consolidates existing partnerships and creates one new partnership  BCA proactively develops connections with and engages campaign allies on issues of importance |
| 1. BCA works to build the capacity of and nurture the organisation, its leaders and aspiring leaders to strengthen the organisation’s ability to deliver on its mission | Annual governance training undertaken by Board and senior management  Annual evaluation of President, Board and CEO completed  Annual staff performance reviews undertaken  General compliance requirements met | Annual governance training undertaken by Board and senior management  Annual evaluation of President, Board and CEO completed  Annual staff performance reviews undertaken  General compliance requirements met | Annual governance training undertaken by Board and senior management  Annual evaluation of President, Board and CEO completed  Annual staff performance reviews undertaken  General compliance requirements met | Annual governance training undertaken by Board and senior management  Annual evaluation of President, Board and CEO completed  Annual staff performance reviews undertaken  General compliance requirements met |
| 1. BCA maintains diverse and sustainable funding to deliver on its future vision | Comply with current financial management practice  Identify and access at least three corporate donors/sponsors during life of this plan  Increase donation income by 50% in the life of the plan | Comply with current financial management practice  At least one corporate partnership or sponsorship in place  Increase donation income by 15% over current year | Comply with current financial management practice  At least two corporate partnerships or sponsorships in place  Increase donation income by 15% over previous year | Comply with current financial management practice  At least two corporate partnerships or sponsorships in place  Increase donations income by 20% over previous year |
| 1. BCA engages in high quality and well targeted individual and systemic advocacy, campaigning, peer support, self-advocacy mentoring and skill development and information dissemination | BCA continues to provide systemic advocacy  Members report having the resources and support needed to undertake self-advocacy  BCA’s individual advocacy work meets all legal and reporting requirements | BCA continues to provide systemic advocacy  Members report having the resources and support needed to undertake self-advocacy  BCA’s individual advocacy work meets all legal and reporting requirements | BCA continues to provide systemic advocacy  Members report having the resources and support needed to undertake self-advocacy  BCA’s individual advocacy work meets all legal and reporting requirements | BCA continues to provide systemic advocacy  Members report having the resources and support needed to undertake self-advocacy  BCA’s individual advocacy work meets all legal and reporting requirements |

## Marketing and Communications Plan

The purpose of BCA’s marketing and communications activities will be to:

* Strengthen BCA’s brand as the national voice of blind and vision impaired Australians so that the expertise of the organisation is widely recognised;
* Promote BCA’s programs and services to more people who are blind or vision impaired, particularly to marginalised groups;
* Increase the visibility of people who are blind or vision impaired in the community.

### Current Situation

BCA’s marketing and communications activities are under-pinned by a strong commitment to the social model of disability. We always focus on the person, not the impairment, because in the social model of disability it is society, not the person’s impairment which creates the barriers to full and equal participation. We are committed to the use of appropriate language to reflect this philosophy. That said, we do not want language to become a limiting factor in our communication with one another or with the broader community. So we respect the right of individuals who are blind or vision impaired to use whatever terminology they choose.

As a peer support, policy development and advocacy organisation BCA has developed comprehensive and multifaceted communications strategies to ensure that information can be easily exchanged between the organisation and its members and as a key element in our peer support, policy development and capacity building initiatives. Current communications channels include:

* New Horizons: a weekly radio program broadcast nationally through 23 radio stations and as a podcast and through the Vision Australia Library Service.
* Blind Citizens News: a quarterly news and opinion magazine that goes to all members in their preferred format.
* BCA-L and other email discussion lists: used extensively for discussion among members and for the administration of various committees and branches.
* Social Media: including Facebook and Twitter accounts.
* The BCA Website.
* Direct email and SMS messaging: to promote BCA projects and events.
* An interactive telephone system: that provides direct access to nationally based staff and serves as an audio information channel for national and branch news;
* Mainstream media exposure: increasingly used in relation to our major campaigning and community awareness initiatives.

### Marketing Goal

BCA is a widely-recognised national representative organisation which speaks with a strong and authentic voice to create opportunities for increased visibility for BCA and its members.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strategy | Key Activities | Responsible |
| 1. Sustain and enhance BCA as a well-recognised national brand | Maintain and continue to develop accessible website and social media feeds  Continue to disseminate quarterly magazine, Blind Citizens News  Continue to produce national weekly radio program and podcast, New Horizons | Staff and volunteers |
| 1. Promote the contribution of people who are blind or vision impaired in all aspects of community life | Continue to build relationships with journalists and media producers and contribute to at least 4 stories per year  Build relationships with disability publications and pitch at least two stories per year. | Staff |

## Financial Plan

### Current Situation

Funding diversification and financial sustainability are high priorities for the Board and staff and are monitored by our Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee. We have made significant progress in terms of generating new income over the past twelve months with revenue increasing from $438,067 in 2017 to $850,135 at the end of the 2018 financial year. This has been due to increased project funding, development of partnerships with blindness agencies and an increase in donations.

In addition to the core funding we receive from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, thanks to the vision of two of our founding members, Hugh Jeffrey and David Blyth, we are fortunate to receive ongoing untied contributions from the Jeffrey Blyth Foundation whose sole beneficiary is BCA.

We also enjoy a long-standing relationship with Vision Australia which includes financial support alongside other areas of collaboration. In the 2017-18 financial year we implemented a Memorandum of Understanding with Guide Dogs Victoria, which includes financial support and other collaborative initiatives. We subsequently negotiated similar arrangements with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and Guide Dogs Qld, with the view to developing similar arrangements with other agencies over time.

### Future Strategies:

During the life of this plan we will:

* Increase annual turnover from $1.1 to $1.5 million to facilitate increased staffing needs and service offerings;
* Maintain compliance with current financial management practice;
* Identify and access increased corporate, donor and sponsorship income;
* Continue to adapt to financial and structural changes caused by NDIS, My Aged Care and changes to advocacy funding;
* Develop a modern and agile fundraising strategy which aligns fundraising with advocacy goals and organizational values and which defines BCA’s approach to member and public fundraising activities, grants and sponsorship acquisition and consideration of potential fee for service models.

## Governance and Management Plan

### Our Board and Subcommittees

BCA is governed by a Board of up to nine Directors, all of whom are blind or vision impaired and all of whom are elected directly by full members of the organisation. The President and other Directors serve a three year term, with elections held on a rotational basis. Over the 43 year history of the organisation more than 80 members have served on the BCA Board.

The BCA Constitution provides that the Board maintain two Standing Committees:

* The Finance Audit and Risk Management Committee (FARM), which involves three Directors and others with expertise in relevant areas;
* The National Policy Council (NPC), which involves three Directors and representatives elected directly by BCA members in each State and Territory.

Other committees and working groups are established on a needs basis to oversee particular aspects of our work, including communications, outreach to diverse communities and the organisation's National Convention.

### Current Directors:

* John Simpson, President
* Helen Freris, Vice-President
* Dan Stubbs, Treasurer and Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee
* Fiona Woods, Chair, National Policy Council
* Mick Baker, Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee
* Stephen Belbin, Branch Liaison, Chair, NSW/ACT Coordinating Committee and Diversity Committee
* Joanne Chua: National Policy Council, Communications Committee and Diversity Committee
* Rocco Cutrie, Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee
* Prue Watt, Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee and Communications Committee.

BCA operations are led by the Chief Executive Officer, Emma Bennison, who is currently supported by a staff team of 12 (8.1 FTE), based across four States, with assistance from 30 volunteers working on discrete projects at various times throughout the year. Staff are divided into two teams, Policy and Advocacy, managed by Angela Jaeschke and Administration, managed by Tony Grant. All staff receive telephone and face-to-face induction and annual performance reviews are a key element of BCA’s strategy to support and provide development opportunities for staff. Regular supervision is also critical, particularly due to the fact that 90% of staff work remotely.

### Board and CEO Recruitment and Succession Planning

The BCA Board is committed to recruitment and succession planning strategies which encompass our President, Directors and CEO, to ensure the organisation remains well-resourced and sustainable.

Since 2015, the Board has maintained a strong commitment to governance training for current Directors. We recognise that not all Directors come to the position with the same level of training or prior experience and we believe it is critical that all receive the training and support needed to ensure they can contribute on an equal basis. Training and mentoring have been delivered through a combination of external consultants and current and former BCA leaders and have covered topics such as general governance skills, financial literacy, conflict of interest and risk management. Directors have also been offered a number of individual training opportunities as these have become available.

Now that a culture of ongoing board development has been established and embraced we have identified the importance of offering training and development opportunities to BCA members with an interest in nominating as Directors. To this end, we delivered a series of teleconferences for aspiring Board candidates prior to the 2018 AGM which were very well received. As a result of the teleconferences, members gained:

* A greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a Director;
* Confidence to undertake the role;
* An opportunity to meet with and learn from current Board members.

BCA is now at a point in its history where it is experiencing significant, fast-paced growth. As such, the Board recognises that it is no longer advisable to assume that we will find the appropriate mix of skills and experience required of Directors by simply leaving the process to run its course. The Board has agreed on the need to identify BCA members with the skills and experience required; and to encourage them to nominate as Directors.

The Board has also re-scoped the President’s duty statement, which was previously far more extensive than is generally accepted in not-for-profit organisations.

The Board appreciates the complexity and demands of the CEO role on the incumbent and is committed to CEO succession planning. It is anticipated that current work being undertaking in relation to leadership development will assist in identifying potential successors. Existing staff also have opportunities to undertake higher duties and receive regular professional development and training which could potentially see them take on the role in the future.

## International Engagement

BCA has a proud record of achievement in supporting the work of the World Blind Union (WBU) and in capacity building projects in several countries:

* Both David Blyth AO and Maryanne Diamond AO have served terms as President of the WBU;
* Bill Jolley has held Office at both the Regional and World levels of the WBU;
* BCA led a consortium of Blindness Agencies to host the Fifth General Assembly of the WBU in Melbourne in 2000;
* For extended periods two BCA Special Interest Branches raised funds and provided in-kind support for blindness service organisations in developing countries;
* BCA has also hosted meetings of the WBU Executive on two occasions;
* Bill Jolley, June Ashmore, Lesley Thiess and several other members have led development projects across the Asia Pacific Region and beyond;
* And several BCA leaders and other members have supported blindness and disability related international projects through organisations such as Arts Access Australia, ICEVI, SPEVI (South Pacific Educators of the Vision Impaired) and the Pacific Islands Disability Forum.

Recently, the BCA Board has renewed its commitment to International Engagement in recognition of the fact that Australia has much to share regarding peer support strategies, affective advocacy, organisational development and governance of organisations of the blind. We also have much to learn from blind people and their organisations in our region and beyond. In a culturally diverse society like Australia, we may well find strategies with which to engage blind people of indigenous or other diverse cultural backgrounds through ideas, resources and initiatives derived outside Australia.

During the life of this Business Plan BCA will:

* Participation in Existing WBU and Other International Activities;
* Increase its outreach to groups of blind people recently or temporarily in Australia:
* explore promising practices in international engagement by other organisations of people with disabilities, and seek resources to develop and implement a model of practice in line with BCA's mission for the empowerment and equality of people who are blind or vision impaired.

BCA has highly valued its position as an equal partner with blindness service agencies as part of the ABF's management of Australia's WBU membership. As options for the restructure of ABF functioning are being considered BCA has indicated its willingness to provide administrative leadership for the Australian WBU delegation. This proposal is outlined in an accompanying paper.

## Risk Management Plan

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Risk | Like/hood | Impact | Mitigation Actions | Response |
| **FUNDING**  Funding reduction prevents BCA from achieving its objectives | Medium | High | Reporting requirements for funding arrangements met  Funding diversification strats in place  Fee for service models explored | Board/  CEO |
| Decline in donations | Medium | High | Review donations process regularly to ensure donor acknowledgement is timely/appropriate.  Develop strategy to grow donor base. | CEO/  Staff |
| Insufficient funding diversity makes BCA vulnerable to funding losses | Medium | High | Funding diversification is a priority.  Annual grants calendar developed.  Fundraising plan developed including seeking corporate/philanthropic partners. | Board/  CEO/  Staff |
| **REPUTATION**  BCA’s reputation is tarnished by action of employee/volunteer | Low | High | Code of conduct signed by all staff during induction  Regular training/ supervision highlighting responsibility as BCA ambassador  Staff have police checks | CEO |
| Employee gives insufficient or wrong information leading to reputational damage/client complaint | Medium | Medium | Staff induction and regular professional development  Supervision/regular staff meetings to share info  Maintain Professional indemnity insurance  Consistent advocacy processes and quality assurance to maintain highest possible standard of service to members. | CEO |
| Alliances/Relationships with other sector organisations become strained | Medium | Medium | Work to develop strong partnerships under-pinned by written agreements.  Act quickly to manage potential conflicts/concerns. | CEO/  Board |
| Members are negative about BCA on social media or in the media | Medium | Medium | Regular and clear communications with members.  Feedback/Complaints procedure in place and members made aware.  Anonymous feedback mechanism in place via BCA’s phone system. | CEO |
| Reputation tarnished due to poorly managed event | Low | High | Ensure event procedures are in place and that organisers are aware of them.  All events have post-evaluation surveys which are accessible and timely.  Feedback considered when planning events.  Risk management plans developed for all events. | CEO/  Staff |
| **HEALTH AND SAFETY**  Employees who are blind or vision impaired exposed to risk when in office without sighted staff member | Low | High | Doors to be locked when no staff with sight are in the office  Staff offered option to work from home. | CEO/  Staff |
| Staff are exposed to health and safety risks due to working from home | Low | High | Working from home policy and check list in place to be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with OH&S reqs  Regular phone/E-mail/text contact with supervisor to combat isolation. | CEO/  Staff |
| Mental health issues resulting from advocacy work | Medium | Medium | Mental health planning session offered to all staff  Regular discussion of mental health and well-being in the workplace  Access to Employee Assistance Program available. | CEO |
| Employee injured undertaking work for BCA | Low | Medium | Current insurances  WH&S standing item on staff meeting agenda. | Board/  CEO |
| Member injured while at BCA | Low | Medium | Current insurances  Accessible and safe office environment  WH&S policy in place  Venues checked, accessibility/safety. | CEO/  Staff |
| Abuse/harassment | Low | High | Abuse/harassment policy in place and communicated to staff and members.  Board/staff have police checks. | CEO/  FARM |
| **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS**  Key Director, CEO or senior staff unable to perform duties | Medium | High | Financial management delegations policy in place  Operational policies and procedures in place and easy to locate  Succession planning and staff development prioritised. | Board/  FARM |
| Board/staff members have insufficient skills to ensure effective organisational management | Medium | High | Board/staff induction/regular training  Board/CEO succession planning  Leadership development progams for BCA members. | Board/  CEO |
| Projects not able to be completed due to insufficient staffing/resources | Medium | Medium | List of temporary staff developed to back fill as needed  Regular supervision in place to ensure staff workloads are manageable  Project budgets include appropriate staffing and resources. | Board/  CEO |
| Fraud, Embezzlement, misappropriation of funds by someone who has sign off on funds | Low | High | Financial management procedures (including debit/credit cards) in place to ensure transparency of transaction  Financial delegations in place. | Board/  FARM/  CEO |
| Data security and member confidentiality - breach of members’ privacy | Medium | High | Code of conduct/ confidentiality agreements signed by all staff and volunteers prior to commencement  Breaches of confidentiality investigated.  Electronic/ hard copy member information is stored securely.  Privacy policy adhered to. | Board/  CEO |
| Loss of data – IT systems failure | Medium | High | IT systems regularly audited to ensure they remain fit for purpose.  Back up plans for all devices in place. | CEO |